Route Development Plans

Examining the RDP planning process

Route Development Plans Definition Team Members:

Randall Kendall	Eastern Region
Mike Mckee	NCR Region
Jeff Sommerville	SC Region
John Donahue	Olympic Region
Ed Pickering	SW Region
Eric Shjarback	NW Region (Mt. Baker)
Tom Washington	Planning and Policy Office
Greg Selstead	HQ Program Management
Dean Moberg	HQ Design
Carol Lee Roalkvam	HQ Environmental Affairs
Ashley Probart	Transportation Planning Office (TPO)
Greg Lippincott	TPO
Gary Westby	TPO
Faris Al-Memar	TPO
Julio Diaz	TPO
Monica Reyes	TPO-Team Leader

Route Development Plans

- How to better integrate Planning Studies, Programming and Project Delivery -

Introduction

The WSDOT Transportation Planning Office has gathered a team of regional planners, design, program management, and environmental representatives to complete a preliminary review of the Route Development Plan planning process. The primary objectives of the team are to:

1) Create a more unified statewide development process.

2) Ensure that RDPs are 'value added' in the overall project delivery process.

3) Identify areas within the existing process that can be refined (? for efficiency).

To meet these objectives the team plans to complete the work in two phases:

Phase 1 – Examine how regions currently develop RDP's. Jointly identify common processes and issues, including areas that require further exploration in Phase 2.

Phase 2 – Review and Integrate findings from Phase 1. Develop a unified approach of how RDPs originate and how RDPs are implemented. Segue way into the work outlined and produced within the Transportation Planning Framework project to meet the primary objectives outlined above.

Recommended Focus Areas

- Determine similar/shared processes (statewide) for preparing an RDP.

- Reassess and update the *RDP Purpose* document.

- Re-examine the current *RDP Checklist*.

- How can RDPs support solution-identification, and contribute to project definition and delivery. List RDP origination and implementation issues.

- Examine and propose better methods for utilizing data (GIS tools, Env. Workbench, and other data sources etc.).

Findings

The team's preliminary assessment of the current purpose, regional processes and components in preparing Route Development Plans revealed:

1) While commonalities in how RDPs are created were revealed and outlined by the group, many fundamental discrepancies between the regions existed making it clear that a more common approach is needed.

2) RDP's can be a useful tool for identifying transportation solutions that lead to project definition. However, how RDPs originate and are implemented remain as root issue(s) needing further examination.

3) A system-wide, or sub-area versus corridor look may improve a longer-term outlook (planning horizon) when identifying deficiencies and solutions.

4) Developing RDP's with stakeholders and jurisdictions are critical in addressing land use issues, predictability, and for tying into GMA.

Analysis & Products

I. RDP Purpose

Work in Phase I included the examination of the *RDP Purpose* document. Through extensive dialogue and debate the group's findings and amendments are included below:

1. Provide 20-year vision of each route within the statewide system that reflects the regional land use and transportation relationship. The vision should be a result of consensus if possible, if not consensus then through systematic development of informed consent between Headquarters and Regions, strategic coordination with RTPO and MPOs, and integration of state, regional and local agency comprehensive plans. Provide a forum for involvement in the state highway planning process for transportation stakeholders*.

2. Serve as a tool, which identifies deficiencies and proposes solutions. These deficiencies and solutions are to be used to update and refine the Highway System Plan. In addition, RDPs maintain a consistent method of deficiency identification by allowing the state highway network to be assessed from a system wide and community network perspective. RDPs identify what state system improvements are appropriate and what local system improvements are needed to keep the state system functioning.

3. Serve as the first step in project development and heritage corridor management plans. Route Development Plans should provide direction to the next step in project delivery for proposed solutions that include multimodal and off-system options. Serving as a source of information gathering, RDPs make early discovery and identification of such elements as environmental, right of way and utility issues possible.

4. Document agreements made internally to WSDOT as well as externally with stakeholders thereby supporting such activities as project delivery, developer review and access management.

5. Serve as a tool for route management between Headquarters and Regions as well as within regional management. The delivery and programming of RDPs and the improvements identified within them should project regional management principles such as financial prioritization and constrainment, route continuity and project delivery.

*The term 'stakeholder' is defined as any party potentially affected by actions identified within the RDP such as Regional management, RTPO/MPOs, Headquarters, the general public, tribes, local government and resource agencies.

Analysis & Products

II. RDP Flowchart and Matrix

Developed with regional consensus, a flowchart (see attachment) displaying general steps currently used by the regions to prepare an RDP was generated. In order to provide a greater amount of detail, this flowchart was formulated into a matrix (see attachment) that accounts the RDP components and processes currently used by the regions in preparing these studies. Collected through a round-table exercise, the matrix displays fundamental elements of an RDP to show the similar and shared processes that exist between regions in developing RDPs.

III. RDP Checklist

The existing *RDP Checklist* was analyzed for areas needing updated or that were missing. Three sub-groups were assigned specific sections of the checklist to evaluate. The resulting feedback included input from each regional planner that revealed both minor changes, such as verbiage, as well as major changes were needed in various sections. The group addressed those suggested changes that they felt comfortable making (see resulting updated Checklist in attachment) and created a parking lot list of those that they identified as needing further examination in Phase 2.

Conclusion

This committee has met its objective of examining and reporting on the current state of the RDP development process. In the context of integrating planning studies with programming and project delivery, the results of this committee's work points to the fact that *RDP origination* and *RDP implementation* remain as root issue(s) needing further examination in Phase 2.

Next Steps

To meet set forth objectives for improving project delivery within the RDP planning process, the group concludes the following items need to be addressed in Phase 2 by a new team of management-level staff and decision makers:

- *How to improve and redefine the existing RDP planning process based on Phase 1 analysis and findings.*

- *How can RDPs support solution-identification, and contribute to project definition and delivery. Examine and propose RDP origination and implementation strategies.*

- *How to segue way into the work outlined and produced within the Transportation Planning Framework project.*